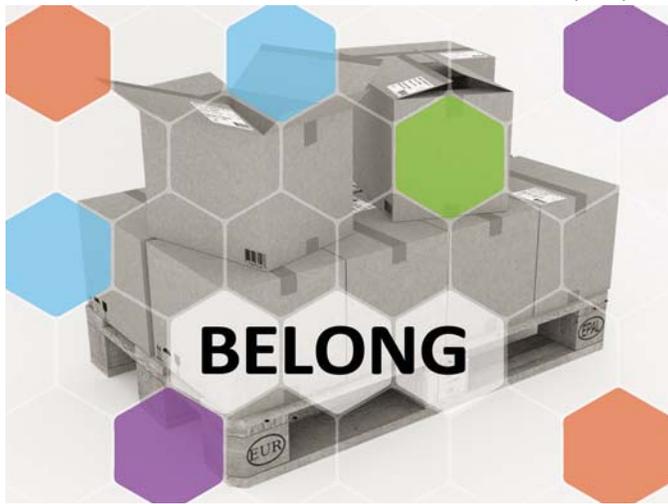


WEEKLY CONNECT

5/21/17



READ GALATIANS 2:11-16

Peter regularly ate with non-Jews until a conservative clique of Jews pushing for the old system of circumcision came to town. Fearful that he'd anger them, Peter distanced himself from the non-Jews.

Paul called him out on this hypocrisy of being hard on new non-Jewish Jesus-followers just to make a good impression on his friends from Jerusalem. Paul reminded him that none of this is about making a favorable impression on anyone. No one has an advantage with God, and no one can please God by self-improvement, Paul said. This is not about rule-keeping. It's about faith.

BUILDING THE CHURCH: WHO'S IN?

The way of the law that Paul refers to in this story basically says that if you believe what we believe, and if you behave the way you're supposed to, you can belong. But Jesus showed his followers a very different way.

Think about how Jesus interacted with people. He welcomed sinners and outsiders into his life. He ate with them, healed them and loved them just as they were. And because he loved and welcomed them just as they were, they began to believe that God could love them and forgive them too, and that began to heal them, so that in time they began to behave differently. In this story Paul is insisting that the Church follow the way of Jesus – loving people just as they are and letting them know that they belong, which begins to change how they live.

What happens when we get these things in the wrong order? What is the danger of demanding the correct behavior or the correct beliefs before we allow someone to belong in our community? What is at stake here?

NEXT WEEK: Galatians 3:1-5, 9, 23-26



RELATIONSHIP

DAY 1: Have you ever needed to believe and behave just like everyone else in a group before you could truly belong? What was that like?



RELATIONSHIP

DAY 2: Do people need to believe and behave the right way in your faith community before they can truly belong? How do you think people visiting your church would answer that question?



SURPRISE

DAY 3: Peter is called out for his “waffling” in this story. Peter welcomes and share meals with people considered to be outsiders until his more conservative friends from Jerusalem show up. Then Peter changes his tune. What do you think? Is this story too hard on Peter? Has your opinion ever waffled, depending on who is in the room? When? Are you more like Peter than you'd care to admit?



PROGRESS

DAY 4: Does your faith community waffle sometimes? Is there a gap between your faith community's proclamation that God's love and grace is all-inclusive, and your faith community's active love and welcome for those same people? Can your faith community truly love marginalized people without openly speaking about and working for their equality, inclusion, rights, and well-being?



SURPRISE

DAY 5: Why do we waffle? Why would a church proclaiming to stand with “the least of these” avoid direct conversations about immigration, healthcare, minimum wage, LGBTQ issues, and more? Is there a gap between our beliefs and our practices? Are we afraid of what some people will think? Are we afraid someone will get angry? Why? Is your church like Peter in this story, or like Paul?



PROGRESS

DAY 6: Is this story still relevant? In what way? Are the implications of this story in our lives today complex and uncomfortable? Should they be? Why, or why not?



RESURRECTION

DAY 7: Does anything need to be rearranged in your heart in order to reflect the way of Jesus – the way of love and welcome? How can we learn to prioritize belonging over beliefs and behavior? What happens when we do that?